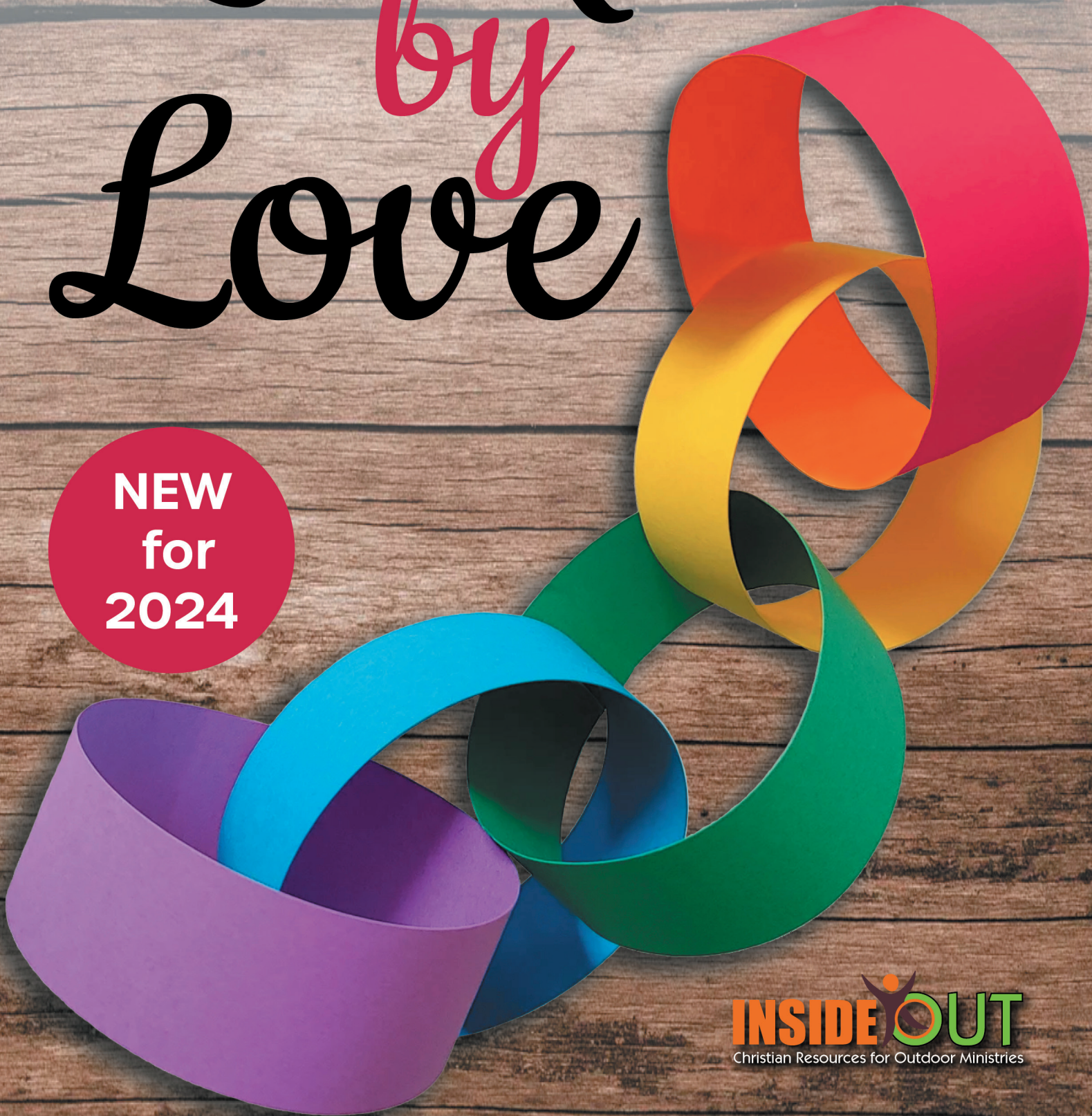


Linked *by* Love

**NEW
for
2024**



Daily Overview for *Linked by Love*

DAY	SCRIPTURE	THEME	CAMPERS WILL
Day 1	Luke 10:38-42	Linked through Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate that everyone is welcome at camp • Be invited to set aside distractions and be present with each other • Honor the different ways we create and respond to welcome • Imagine the impact of inviting Jesus into their relationships
Day 2	Job 2:11-13	Linked and Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the power of presence in a friend's time of need • Learn that God is with us when we are with each other • Come to know that each person's emotional needs are unique
Day 3	Luke 15:11-32	Linked by Grace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be assured that God freely offers grace and love to everybody • Learn that owning mistakes is the first step toward reconciliation • Examine how forgiveness in action can be difficult • Explore reconciliation as something to be celebrated
Day 4	Exodus 18:5-24	Linked in Truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how honest conversations deepen healthy relationships • Ponder how receiving Spirit led truth helps us grow • Discuss the challenges everyone faces when one tries to do it all • Consider the benefits of relationships like Jethro and Moses in their own lives.
Day 5	1 John 4: 7-9; 19	Linked to Love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be reminded that love is from God and that God's love is an example of how to love others. • Be sent to share God's love in their relationships

NARRATIVE OVERVIEW

We know that love comes from God, and sometimes we experience it directly. More often, God's love in manifest in relationships of all kinds that weave in and out of our lives. We see God's love in close friends and family – those we are born into and those we chose along the way. We see God in quiet moments where we are present with each other and in acts of profound grace when we have been far apart. We hear God in life guiding and life changing words of truth from those who know and love us. We know that such love links our lives, teaching us about commitment, intimacy, grace, and faith. As we seek to create and strengthen life giving relationships, we remember that such love flows from God, links us all together, and we give thanks.

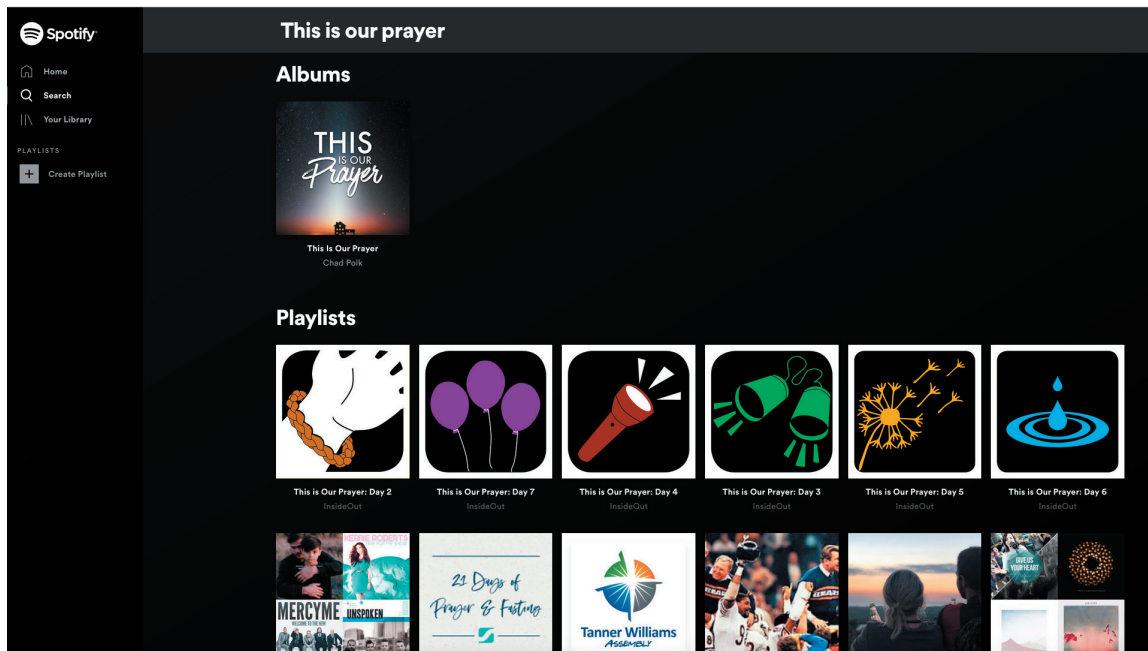


This year we're introducing a new resource as part of our program offerings. Music has always been one of the best ways for people to connect with each other and with God, so we've created a playlist of songs to go with each day of *Linked By Love*. Just search for *Linked By Love* and scroll down to Playlists.

Spotify is a versatile music platform that can bolster the great things your camp is already doing in a number of ways, such as:

1. Include songs in your daily worship that tie in the theme of the day.
2. Have something to play in the background during arts & crafts, free time, etc.
3. Connect with campers who feel the presence of God more tangibly in music than they do in sermons or activities.
4. Use individual songs on the playlists for Bible studies and devotions.
5. Show campers how many styles of Christian music there really is, and how even songs that weren't originally written for a worship setting can still be used for contemplative prayer.
6. Encourage your campers and staff to follow InsideOut on Spotify so they have something to remind them of camp in the off-season.

We hope you'll use and enjoy our latest resource! It is completely free to use.





Day 1: Linked through Acceptance

Luke 10:38-42

This story is revolutionary! If not for us, it would have been for those present with Jesus, and even for some churches just fifty years ago. Women in the 1st Century were supposed to serve like Martha. Hospitality was about doing household chores and providing food and drinks to the guest. Men were supposed to be the ones who spent their time studying with learned teachers and sitting at their feet. But here is Jesus with Mary, a woman who is behaving much more like a disciple than a maid. Jesus lifts her up as a model of what he believes hospitality should look like. Jesus affirms the importance of presence and attentiveness, not just business.

Among other things, this is a story about “welcoming.” Our theme for the day is “Linked Through Acceptance,” but acceptance is a word with a broad spectrum of uses. We can accept something, acknowledging its presence or naming it as a reality. I can accept that I have work to do, even if I don’t want to work. I can accept a person is present, even if I wish they were not. God’s love calls us to do more than acknowledge others, truly welcoming them into community. We are challenged to assure them that they are in a safe place. I wonder when you have experienced the different extremes of acceptance in your life.

What must it have felt like to Mary and Martha to have Jesus in their home? Maybe they were excited, maybe even joyful to have him there. Surely, they each wanted to show him hospitality by taking care of the tasks that

would have made him comfortable. Welcome might look like excitement and curiosity, or enthusiasm about the teachings of their guest; it might be arms open wide and true happiness at receiving a guest. And isn’t that the real welcome we all hope for? To truly welcome someone into a community, we go out of our way to make others feel at home, like Mary and Martha did with Jesus.

Now, you might notice that Martha critiques Mary, and Jesus critiques Martha. Martha does not understand that Mary is welcoming Jesus in a different but also authentic way. Martha is caught up in expectations and anxiety over the event. Jesus says nothing until Martha complains. When she is not able to see the value in Mary’s work, Jesus speaks up. He starts by confronting her worry.

When we get anxious, it is often because we are thinking about the future or the past. Sometimes we are thinking about what others might be thinking. Whenever our thoughts linger, it becomes difficult to enjoy what is right in front of us. We can lose our sense of gratitude, and our actions become more of a duty than an expression of love and hospitality. We may still accept others, but it is hard to share the full acceptance of a warm welcome and abiding peace.

This story reminds us that slowing down and keeping things simple can seem counterproductive but can change our attitude and allow love to be shared more fully.

Taking a pause can also allow our hearts and minds to get on the same page. Biases can be challenged by the unconditional love we know Jesus calls us to share. Frantic work can be paused long enough to make sure we don’t miss those we are serving, especially those who feel neglected or unloved. I wonder: when have you seen the church so busy or focused on something that people were left unloved, neglected, or disrespected? Where have you seen acceptance that did not measure up to a full welcome?

God’s radical welcome to all of us as beloved children is our model of extending hospitality to one another. As you think about what it might mean for you to truly welcome Jesus into your own heart this week, think also about who around you might need to feel that radical welcome and how you might share it. Use your own gifts. Don’t try to be someone else. We all serve in our own way, just like Mary and Martha, and God can use us all to extend a warm welcome into this beloved community.



Day 2: Linked and Present

Job 2:11-13

We often talk about being there for each other, but sometimes it's a little complicated to define "being there." Sometimes it is about listening or supporting. Sometimes it is about standing up for them or with them. Sometimes it is keeping a secret or keeping them company. In our story today, we see Job's friends literally sitting with Job in silence and it makes all the difference.

It is probably helpful to name that Job does not show up in a traditional timeline or chronology of scripture. It is a story that stands on its own. It is a hybrid book with different styles of writing woven together, combining story and poetry in beautiful ways. This also invites us to read the book a little differently. Job is intended to be read and discussed, with wisdom coming from our reflections rather than specific teachings in the story. It's like a scenario for debate, and in wrestling with the story, we grow in lots of ways.

Some of us have seen a lot of hurt in our lives and might identify with Job, but for many it is easier to identify with the friends who come to support him. They cry with Job and participate in all the same rituals that Job did when he was first faced with all this hurt. Still, no one spoke to him. The friends just sit in solidarity, knowing how deeply Job is hurting. Their tears show that they understand his emotions and empathize with him. Their participation in his rituals and customs shows that they know and understand Job. They don't just have compassion. They know his culture and traditions. They know what brings meaning and gives comfort to their friend. By participating, they are in solidarity with Job. Then, they just sit for a while. No words could do it justice.

By being present, we can represent God's presence, to friends or those in need. Once we open our mouths,

we tend to represent ourselves: Our own feelings and worries come out and we can make things worse. If you want an example, keep reading the book of Job and see how bad things get when the friends decide it's time to talk. It's not good. In difficult times, we are called to simply help people stay connected to God and each other. Our presence connects us and provides support that goes far beyond words. We may feel like we are not doing anything to help when we just hang out with a friend who needs us but being with someone can do a lot. We can be the presence of God to our hurting friend. Our love and friendship can be the reminder of God's love and friendship with that person, even if they may feel like God is far away.

When we are little, we get our first doses of a hormone in the body called oxytocin. It is sometimes called the "love hormone" or "cuddle chemical." It is released when we are held by our earliest care givers, and in romantic relationships, but also when we give and receive empathy. It's what we are looking for when we feel like we need a hug to lift our spirits, and the other person feels better, too. You might notice it in the sigh of relief we make when we feel like we are seen and understood. It's great when we can identify with each other, but to feel truly understood, we need to be heard. Listening to each other to simply hear their story allows the uniqueness of their personal experience to come through.

But sometimes it is just so hard not to talk! We have our own feelings that want to ooze out. Sometimes we have wisdom to share from our own experience. Sometimes we think we can bring comfort. Occasionally that is true, but it can be difficult to figure out what is wisdom, and what is our own issue. We can be impatient. We can be judgmental. We can become exhausted with all the powerful emotions. We can think someone is overreacting. We can think it is their fault. We can think lots of things, but before we give voice to any, we need to make sure it is about caring for someone in need rather than breaking the tension so we can move on or get out of a situation.

That is the beauty of God's presence. God never tires of being with us and never speaks over us. We know that God understands our suffering because God, as a parent, has experienced the loss of a child, in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, God even experienced being humiliated and physically hurt. So, our presence alone can be a gentle reminder that God is always with us and understands our struggle. When we pray about our

struggles or lift up the hurt of someone else, we can trust that God understands.

For campers, sitting in silence may be new or even physically difficult. We are a multitasking and multisensory society. Camp can be a place to practice stopping to just be present with God and others. Camp can be a place to practice communication beyond words as we pay attention to each other's body language, behaviors, and mood. Camp can be a place to practice listening to others or trusting others with our hurts. Camp staff need to model active listening and empathy; this will allow campers to feel safe, feel known, and discover God in ways they had not imagined.



Day 3: Linked by Grace

Luke 15:11-32

While this story may seem familiar, be prepared to hear it for the first time. There is a chance one of your campers might be doing just that, and others may have heard it so many times they have stopped listening for how God might be speaking through it in a new way today. There are lots of ways to approach this story, but for this day of camp, we want to think about the distances between people.

We all have an ego. So do the characters in the story. The younger brother seems to think pretty highly of himself, demanding what was “owed to him” as his share of the inheritance. In the process, he distances himself from family. The older brother sees himself as better for having stayed and puts up a barrier between himself and those gathered to celebrate. In both cases, their ego allowed them to justify their own act of separation.

Neither son's situation is really fair. Both, at different points, felt they deserved something. The father probably had his own feelings about that too. All three of them had choices about how they would respond

to the actions of others. Instead of asking what is ‘fair,’ Luke asks us to imagine what grace would look like at each turn. We are reminded that none of us is perfect and that we all make bad choices at times. We can give thanks that God is not about what is ‘fair’ but about how grace can be shared.

This story shows us the power of grace. The younger son finds the humility to admit he was wrong and returns home, closing the gap between himself and family. He receives grace from his father, who sets aside his own ego to hike up his robe and run to his returning child. The father didn't worry about how he might have enabled this child, or if others would see him as a naive or permissive parent. He just ran and covered his son in grace. Later, he goes out looking for his older son who is also pulling away. The father does not yell at him and doesn't talk tough. Instead, the father begs him to offer grace. In both cases, the father tries to span the gap that has been created, setting aside his own ego and pride.

Instead of validation, the story calls us to be humble and reflect on our own levels of responsibility. Instead of pushing others away or distancing ourselves, the story calls us to stay in relationship with each other. Sometimes we create distance because we think too little of ourselves. Sometimes we create distance because we think too much of ourselves. Either way, when we can admit our faults, we close the distances our egos have created. We can rediscover love where we might have expected judgment. We can see God manifest in the grace shared between us and know that we are never truly alone. This is good news!

Forgiveness is something we can all do. It is a personal task. Reconciliation is a more complicated process that requires another so that a relationship can be healed. For that, more than one person must find their humility, reflect on themselves, and be prepared to offer grace. First though, we have to be ready to forgive. Forgiveness is something we choose to do; it is not easy, but it can be life changing. Forgiveness can involve looking at things from another person's perspective and having empathy or compassion. Forgiveness can involve an acknowledgement of our own role in a conflict and deciding the hurt we carry is not worthy the emotional toll.

In her book, *Traveling Mercies*, Anne Lamott writes, “Not forgiving is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die.” In today's story we see what it looks like when the work of forgiveness is done.

Before the younger son can get out his apology, the father is running to him. Grace is already at work. We might assume the same grace is already present for the older, brooding, brother as his father pleads for him to come join the party. In neither case was their a question about grace being deserved. That is the power of grace. It is not about our human standards of fairness. Grace is an unmerited gift. We receive grace by simply being humans—children of God. We are the ones who put conditions on God’s love and grace. We are the ones who let our biases and hurts dictate who we will and will not forgive. We are the ones who let our egos create distance between us and others. We create our own distance between us and God.

Camp is a place to practice grace. It is not just about “saying grace” for a meal. Yet, each meal we eat can remind us that there are lots of things we receive that we have not worked for. Camp is full of opportunities to show grace and talk about the importance of claiming God’s grace in our lives. Today’s scripture will reach everyone in a different way: Different campers and staff will relate to different characters in the story. Be open to where the story and the campers lead the conversation today, but make sure that when the day ends, everyone knows they are loved and forgiven by God and that we have closed the distances between us.



Day 4: Linked in Truth

Exodus 18:5-24

There is some irony in today’s story. God sent Moses to bring the people out of Egypt. Even God did not try to do everything alone! Yet, Moses is burning himself out trying to be all things to all people. If it is OK for God to delegate, surely Moses can let go of some responsibilities, right? It takes a trusted voice to help Moses evaluate his leadership style and self-care, and in that conversation, we get important lessons about respect and boundaries.

It is clear from the way they greet each other that Moses and his father-in-law care about each other. Moses could receive the advice of the older, wiser man, even though Moses was the one who had been talking to God. Jethro is worried about Moses trying to lead a huge community through difficult circumstances while also navigating their interpersonal relationships and conflicts. Jethro’s concern is for Moses, but there are two sides to the issue: One is self-care for Moses; the other is a concern for the people. Moses respects Jethro enough to listen. Jethro respects Moses enough to tell him the truth.

Moses also has to learn to respect the community he serves and trust people to rise up and lead alongside him. He clearly needs to learn some boundaries so that he can be the best leader possible. How can he focus on the big tasks ahead if he is distracted by other issues? How can Moses have the strength needed if he is not keeping a healthy balance in his life? By setting some boundaries, Moses is able to affirm the gifts of others and care for himself.

Boundaries and respect are important, and we can see in this story how love and truth telling are part of both. We all have lots of responsibilities. Some of those responsibilities keep asking more and more of us: This can be family or friends who are demanding of our time or don’t listen when we share our own needs; this can be work or school acting like they are the only responsibility we have, this can be our own insecurity, telling us that we need to prove ourselves, again and again. Loving others means we respect their boundaries, including when they tell us “no.” Loving others means trusting them enough to state our limits. If someone does not respect our boundaries, they are not acting out of love, but rather control. They can look alike. Both can heap on attention and affirmation, but the goals are clearly different.

Jethro shows us the power of speaking to those we love with honesty and respect rather than judgment. Moses shows us the importance of listening and the powerful potential of mentors in our life. We don’t just do everything a wise mentor tells us, but we do listen and trust their good intentions. In conversation with a mentor, we can find new ways forward that we might not have imagined before. None of us can succeed in life alone. We all need others in order to see our own hopes and dreams come about. The Search Institute and other researchers have long suggested that young

people need at least one adult outside their family who they trust and can speak with openly; they have suggested that three to five is even better. This is very true in Christian communities where wisdom and love are passed down from one generation to the next.

How good are you at taking advice in your own life? Who is it that you trust to say the difficult things? What keeps you from hearing those who love you? If you can answer these questions, then you are truly blessed. If you are still wrestling with them, that is OK too. We are all works in progress, and none of us can find all the answers alone.

Imagine how empowered those who were asked to help by Moses must have felt. Imagine the deep affirmation of someone you respect asking you to help them. You could offer that same type of experience to your campers. By being on staff, you hold a position of power and respect. When you invite others into the work and respect their gifts, they find meaning and feel included. That doesn't mean we pass off all our work onto campers: That would be teaching them bad boundaries. If we let love lead the way, respect the gifts each camper brings, and are willing to set aside our "need to be needed," then the Holy Spirit can do amazing things!



Day 7: Linked to Love

1 John 4: 7-9; 19

All the love we experience first comes from God, who is the source of all love. We are able to love others because we were first loved by God. This passage from John tells us to look to Christ to see the depth of God's love for us. Rather than the traditional shape of a heart, imagine the cross as a symbol of love. On the cross, there is the vertical or north and south beam. This symbolizes God's love coming into us. There is the east and west, horizontal beam, which is God's love extending out to others—like arms reaching out to hug. As we have learned this week, we need both. We need love coming into us from God in order to extend that love out to others. This is how Jesus loved, coming into the world by the love of God and then sharing that love through his words, deeds, and relationships. He was constantly being filled by God's love in order that he could continue to share it. He didn't keep love to himself, but he knew that love is meant to be shared. Our love is meant to be shared as well. So we become linked to love through the shape of the cross—God's love enters us, and we then share that love with one another.

God created us to give and receive love, both physically and emotionally. Our relationships impact our body in lots of unseen ways. There are lots of chemicals in our body that are generated in relationship with others,

and not just hormones. When we laugh together, cry together, share a hug, or stand up for justice together, our bodies receive doses that empower and heal. Our bodies are wonderfully made, and we are still learning the powerful ways our brains function. One thing we know for sure is that we are built for community. We are not robots, but sensitive beings that need engagement. As we share our lives together, we affirm to others that they are loved. When we accept care from others, it reminds us that we are lovable and loved. In this, we are linked together and reminded that from the beginning, God created us as connected beings. We are connected to each other and to God.

As you lead this last day of camp, remind campers to look and reach up, to establish that connection to God; remind them to look around and reach out to establish connections with others. Remind them that in the center of both is their own heart, ready to give and receive love. We are built for and linked to love.



Day 1: Linked through Acceptance

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Luke 10:38-42

Scripture Focus: Luke 10:41-42

The Lord answered, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part. It won’t be taken away from her.”

Theological Summary: When we accept ourselves and others for who we all are, we learn to love God, our neighbors, and ourselves better.

Today, campers will...

- Celebrate that everyone is welcome at camp
- Be invited to set aside distractions and be present with each other
- Honor the different ways we create and respond to welcome
- Imagine the impact of inviting Jesus into their relationships

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Many Gifts	PLAY	Name Game
__ Truth or Choices	PLAY LEARN	Choose your preferences game
__ Breathe and Be	PRAY	Meditation to help campers be present
__ More than their Names	LEARN CREATE	Sketch the scripture
__ Behind the Words	LEARN	What context made this text important?
__ You Are Welcome!	SERVE CREATE	Creating welcome banners for worship
__ The Better Part For Me	PRAY	Prayer journal reflection time

Leader Notes: One of the biggest road bumps in today’s text is the issue created by Jesus claiming Mary has chosen “better.” Help campers break this down – is it that learning is better than feeding your guests, or is it that it was better for Mary to be who she was instead of fitting into her culture-prescribed role?

Prayer: God, thank you for this camp community where we try our best to accept, value, and welcome everyone. Help us always grow in that direction, widening our welcome, until our practice matches up with your abundant love. Amen.

Daily Activities

Many Gifts

PLAY

Supplies: None

How: This game is similar to “What Do You Love?” on Day 1. Ask the campers to sit in a circle and think of something they are good at and create a hand sign or motion that represents it. For example, “My name is Lara and I Learn Quickly” (*tap temple with index finger*). Once campers have decided upon their gifts/motions, go around the circle once so that each person can introduce their name and gift. You can simply try to have each person try to remember everyone else’s as you go around the circle, or make it more complicated by removing one seat and having a volunteer start in the middle of the circle. The person in the middle calls out the name of a person and makes their motion, then counts to three. The person whose name was called must say someone else’s name and give their motion before the count ends, or they trade places with the camper in the middle. If they do get the call in on time, the person whose name was called must do the same thing before the person in the middle counts to three. This continues till someone makes a mistake up or is too slow.

Try This: You can adapt the count to match the ability of your group. You can also have two volunteers in the middle playing at the same time just to add more challenge to the game.

Truth or Choices

PLAY LEARN

Supplies: None

How: This is an adaptation of a familiar camp game. Invite campers to move to one side of your meeting space or the other depending on their choices to the following prompts, then ask the campers to discuss which ones are just an opinion and which they feel are genuinely better. Ask them if they have ever had someone else’s opinion forced on them to the point of conflict, and how people learn to respect each other more fully. These prompts are just starting point. You can add more of your own.

- Binge TV at home or go out to a movie
- Eat meat or eat vegetables
- Exercise or take a nap

- Have perpetual summer or perpetual winter
- Sing songs in church or listen to the sermon
- Worship or serve others
- Lead or follow

Try This: Invite the campers to revisit the choices as if Jesus was answering. Invite them to think of stories about Jesus from the Bible, or the places Jesus visited. Ask them how Jesus might respond to those who disagreed.

Breathe and Be

PRAY

Supplies: None

How: Ask the campers what distractions from home keep them from being completely present while a camp. Explain that focusing on our breathing can help us keep our minds and body together in the present. Invite campers to get in a comfortable position and close their eyes but remind them not to fall asleep. Use the following notes to guide them in a meditation, speaking slowly and leaving a pause after each line.

- Breathe in slowly and deeply. Feel the breath fill your lungs.
- Breathe out slowly and completely. Set aside the distractions you brought with you from home.
- Breathe in slowly and deeply. Feel the presence of God’s Spirit within you in this moment.
- Breathe out slowly and completely. Let go of the worries that take your mind away from this place.
- Breathe in slowly and deeply. Allow yourself to be HERE, in this group, right now.
- Breathe out slowly and completely. Release the thoughts that keep you from listening to one another.
- Now, when you are ready, begin to move in small ways. Wiggle your fingers and toes. Roll your shoulders. Open your eyes, ready for whatever we might learn together.

Try This: If your group responds well to this meditation, consider using it at the beginning of each small group – or use it on days when campers seem wound up or distracted. You might also encourage a different camper to lead the meditation each day.

More than their Names

CREATE LEARN

Supplies: Paper, markers, Bible

How: Read Luke 10:38-42 together, then invite the campers to imagine what Mary and Martha, were like both based on what the text explicitly tells us about them and based on where those details lead their imaginations. Read the passage again and encourage the campers to let it feed their imagination. Divide the campers into groups of two or three and give them some paper and markers. Invite the campers to create their own depiction of Mary and Martha. These can be drawn, created with words, or made with a combination of both. Afterwards, allow time for any campers who wish to share.

Try This: You could add a level of mystery to this activity by telling campers to NOT add names to their drawings so that they can guess which image goes with which sister.

Behind the Words

LEARN

Supplies: Bible

How: Explain that often in scripture, looking “behind the story” can help us to see what life was like during the time it was told or written down. This practice of looking behind the story is one way we can understand its context. Invite a volunteer to read Luke 10:38-42 aloud. Ask campers to listen for what is happening behind the words.

Encourage campers to consider and discuss the questions:

- Why do you think this story was important enough for it to be included in the gospel of Luke?
- Which sister was doing the “normal” thing expected of her?
- What does that tell you about what was expected for women?
- What made the other sister’s choice “weird” or “abnormal”?
- Was it fair for Jesus to say that one choice was better than another? Why or why not?
- Were both activities needed? Why or why not?

Try This: To go deeper, ask campers to think of modern comparisons to the story. What would Mary and Martha choose between today? Which things do we value, and which do we look down upon?

You are Welcome!

SERVE CREATE

Supplies: Large paper or poster, markers, crayons, construction paper, tape/glue, other art supplies

How: Remind campers that it can be hard to feel truly welcome in our communities and for some that includes Church. Invite them to make signs to assure everyone at camp that they are welcome. After the signs are made, hand them in the dining hall or other common space so that every group can see each other’s welcome signs and so that everyone is surrounded by that welcome as they come and go from that space.

Remind the campers to include everyone in the creative process, making sure everyone’s gifts are used and that everyone has a role to play.

Try This: If the banner is coming together and a couple students start seeming bored, give them a smaller piece of poster board to create a welcome sign or welcome mat for your meeting space.

The Better Part...For Me

PRAY

Supplies: None (paper and pens optional)

How: Ask the campers to reflect on Jesus words, “the better part.” Invite them to imagine what choices they are asked to make, and which ones Jesus might call “the better part.” Remind them that everyone may have a different answer, and some might even seem like opposites. Allow time for those who wish to share. Now, offer this question and a time for silent reflection and prayer without bringing responses back to the group: What choice are you facing in your life, what are the options, and which might Jesus refer to as “the better part” for you?

This would be a good place to invite campers to use a journal to write their thoughts or draw what comes to mind.

Try This: Consider playing soft music while campers reflect, write, or pray. If you are using journals, invite them to take turns placing their closed journal in a pile while saying “This is my prayer.” Then close with a prayer of your own or simply say “Amen.”



Day 2: Linked and Present

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Job 2:11-13

Scripture Focus: Job 2:13

They sat with Job on the ground seven days and seven nights, not speaking a word to him, for they saw that he was in excruciating pain.

Theological Summary: God is always with us and is often most tangible through those closest to us. By being with each other in times of need, God is with us all.

Today, campers will...

- acknowledge the power of presence in a friend’s time of need
- learn that God is with us when we are with each other
- come to know that each person’s emotional needs are unique

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Too Close	PLAY	Game about presence
__ Motivating Motion	PLAY LEARN	Unspoken motion game
__ Sound of Silence	LEARN PRAY	Reflections on silent responses
__ More than Words	LEARN PRAY	Writing with water
__ We Got You	CREATE PRAY	Naming power of rituals
__ Servants	SERVE	Active listening practice
__ That Counts	LEARN	These words of should be on one line

Leader Notes: What happens after this text is that Job’s friends open their mouths and ruin the mood with words of critique and judgement. Younger youth are old enough to think about how we can do a good job supporting others and how we can also mess up, even in the same day. Don’t be afraid to explore the gray areas together.

Prayer: God, thank you for the friends we have and the ways you connect us. Help us support each other and feel your Spirit blow through us all. Amen



Daily Activities

Too Close

PLAY

Supplies: None

How: Have one volunteer stand in the middle of a large play space. The rest of the group spreads out at least twenty yards away. The volunteer closes their eyes while the rest of the campers try to quietly creep closer. Once the volunteer in the middle thinks someone is close, they shout “freeze.” Everyone stops and the volunteer opens their eyes. If someone gets close enough to touch the volunteer, they should stay there but not make contact, standing as close as possible. Let a few campers take turns as the volunteer. Afterwards, spend some time talking about how they decided when to call “freeze” and if you can really feel someone near you if they don’t make a sound.

Try This: You could put flags or bandannas very close to the volunteer and see if anyone can collect one and get away without being noticed.

Motivation Motion

PLAY LEARN

Supplies: None

How: Chose one volunteer to step away from the group while the rest form a standing circle. Ask those who remain to pick a simple activity such as fishing or skateboarding along with a leader. The volunteer returns with no one speaking. When ready, the leader will start making movements that the rest of the group will copy. Challenge the leader to begin and change motions subtly and when the volunteer is not looking so that they don’t know who the leader is. When the person in the middle thinks they know the activity, they raise both hands. Pause the activity and let them act out the activity, then say it out loud. If they guess correctly, let them try to guess the leader as well. If they miss it, resume the activity and see if they can figure it out. In all of this, the only camper who should speak is the volunteer guessing. After you are done playing, spend a few minutes talking about what can be communicated without words and what things need clarification. Ask the group if there are any things that words make harder to communicate but silence might help share.

Try This: You can play the entire game without any talking by having the volunteer guess by simply reenacting the activity, either by repeating the motions they saw or doing their own mime of the activity. Campers can answer their guess by nodding or shaking their heads.

Sound of Silence

LEARN PRAY

Supplies: None

How: Ask the campers to think of times when someone did not say anything to them when they were expecting judgment. How did it feel to have someone not condemn or attack your decision or behavior? Ask the campers to think of a time when they wanted to someone to say something and they only got silence. How did it feel to expect feedback, direction, or affirmation and receive silence?

Read Job 2:11-13 together, then ask the campers to think about what Job might have felt when he saw the friends coming, and how he might have felt about their silence.

Invite the campers to visit with a partner and share a time they spoke when they should have stayed silent or when someone spoke to them that should have been silent. Once they all have had a chance to share, ask the campers to think about their partner’s lament, offering it as a silent prayer to God. After the time of silence, close with “Amen.”

Try This: Consider having campers sit back-to-back and lean on each other as they listen to each other share. Afterwards, ask them how it felt to have someone that close to them while sharing something personal.

More than Words

LEARN PRAY

Supplies: Water, dixie cups, smooth flat surface outside

How: Explain that in today’s scripture reading, Job is a farmer and rancher who has lost all his livestock and mourned the death of all his children in a very short time and is now afflicted with soars all over his body. Read Job 2:11-13 together. Ask the campers what questions they might have if they were Job’s friends or things they might want to say. Invite them to brainstorm about what each possible question or statement might sound like to Job, or how it might

make him feel. Remind them that our words can help but often, even if we mean well, they can hurt. Ask the campers to think of a time when someone tried to help them but made things worse or at least uncomfortable. Give each camper a small cup of water and invite them to find a smooth flat surface in the sun. Invite them to dip their finger in the water and use it to write words they wish had not been said to them, or words they wish they had not said to someone else. Encourage them to think or pray about how they can be a good friend in the future by their presence and care as they watch the words evaporate.

Try This: You could let campers brainstorm things people always say to make others feel better and talk about how they personally respond to such words.

We Got You

CREATE PRAY

Supplies: Large paper, markers

How: Read Job 2:11-13 and explain that Job's friends come from far away and may or may not have been part of his religion and culture. They were definitely not part of his family. Ask the campers how they feel about the friends participating in the Job's ritual of grief (sack cloth and ashes) as a sign of solidarity. Brainstorm a list of rituals and traditions that people in our culture do to show support and solidarity. Some examples might include funerals, "survivor walks," and advocacy ribbons. Ask the campers what other ways they have seen people join in shared activity to support a friend. This might even be digital projects like a "go fund me" or sharing memories on a social media post. Remind the campers that every culture, even modern and changing cultures like ours, have expressions of solidarity and support. Invite the campers to come up with a way they can affirm each other all week, especially if someone is having a rough day. This might be simple words of greeting, a special handshake or gesture, or something very simple that others might not even notice. Let your group be creative.

Try This: Campers could come up with a social media code that they will use to affirm each other when they leave camp. Maybe it is a common emoji that they give new meaning, or more elaborate plan to pray for each other on different days.

Servants

SERVE

Supplies: None

How: Pair up the campers and ask one to be the talker and one the listener. The talker will share statements that are true to them. These can be serious, silly, or whatever is on their mind. The listener sits beside them, only responding with positive body language and facial expressions – no words. Afterwards, let them trade roles and then spend some time talking about how listening without interrupting or judging can be a real gift to others. Ask the campers about their positive and negative experiences with sharing and listening within their home community.

Try This: Consider rotating partners rather than switching with the first partner. This will make listening more of an act of service and less of an exchange for the other giving the same gift in return.

That Counts

LEARN

Supplies: none

How: For each of the following scenarios, ask campers to choose one of the following responses: text, call, show-up, post (on social media). Campers can respond as you read the scenarios by shouting out one of the options, or you can take a poll for each one. Here are the scenarios to share. Start each with, "A good friend..."

- is the only one in friend group without a date on Valentine's Day
- has not communicated in a week
- just got dumped
- posts a racist meme
- discovered their bicycle was stolen
- won a big basketball tournament
- just found out they are moving out of state
- told you their parent just got diagnosed with cancer
- texts you about feeling useless and hopeless
- tells others they are in love with you
- is grieving a close family member who died

After you have gone through the scenarios and gotten first responses, go back through and ask the campers if there are more complicated options for any of them and what other ways they might be present with a friend. If they struggle to think of things, ask them to imagine being the friend in that situation and think

about what would bring them comfort or make them feel supported. Ask the campers how important it is for friends to be together in good times as well as in struggle.

Try This: Add another layer to this conversation by naming different forms of communication that are in-person and that are digital and ask the campers to affirm which ones they consider real and important parts of friendship and connection and which ones are too distant or superficial. This could include text, post-cards, facetime, letters, texts, etc.



Story Resources

Finding Nemo (Disney – Pixar, 2003): Dory becomes a strange companion for Marlin as he searches for his son. Even when she can't be helpful, her presence is more important to Marlin than he knows. At the same time, Nemo is learning about the importance of new friends and how to stand by each other in frightening times.

Boy + Bot, by Amy Dyckman (Knopf Books, 2012): A boy and a bot keep trying to help the other with the things that make them feel better. Eventually they learn about each other and friendship.



Day 3: Linked by Grace

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Luke 15:11-32 Elijah and the Widow

Scripture Focus: Luke 15:31-32

Then his father said, ‘Son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found.’”

Theological Summary: All of us, no matter how many or how few mistakes we’ve made, are linked by God’s grace. Grace allows us not only to be forgiven, but to admit when we are wrong and accept forgiveness.

Today, campers will...

- Be assured that God freely offers grace and love to everybody
- Learn that owning mistakes is the first step toward reconciliation
- Examine how forgiveness in action can be difficult
- Explore reconciliation as something to be celebrated

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ True Grace	PLAY	Two falsehoods and a truth
__ Chicken or the Egg	PLAY LEARN	Creative story game
__ Who’s the Prodigal	LEARN	Is the younger brother the only prodigal?
__ Forgiveness Court	LEARN	Which characters deserve grace?
__ Awkward Acceptance	CREATE LEARN	How to accept apologies & forgiveness
__ Gifts of Grace	SERVE CREATE	Extending grace to whole community
__ Forgiveness Received	PRAY	What words do you need to hear?
__ Amazing Grace	PRAY	Praying verses from the hymn

Leader Notes: Be careful when teaching about forgiveness -- it cannot be forced upon survivors of abuse and trauma. If a survivor does forgive their abuser or attacker, that also does not mean they must reconcile and remain in relationship with them.

Prayer: God, no one knows forgiveness and love better than you. Help us experience the freedom that comes with forgiveness and help us to change when we are in the wrong. Amen.

Daily Activities

True Grace

PLAY

Supplies: None

How: This game is similar to “Two Truths and Lie” but with a twist. Explain to campers that they will share three mistakes or bad choices with the group: two that aren’t true and one that actually did happen. Stress that these should all be minor things that don’t embarrass them and that don’t involve illegal activity. For example: I got detention for talking too much in class; I told my mom that the dog broke the lamp; I said something mean to my sister when she was annoying me. Invite campers to take turns sharing their three statements so that the group can guess which one is true.

Try This: You can add on to this game by turning it into an introductory discussion about grace and forgiveness. Stress that as an extension of God’s love for us all, God offers grace and forgiveness to us when we mess up.

Chicken or the Egg

PLAY LEARN

Supplies: None

How: For each of pairs listed, ask the campers “Which came first?” Invite them to be creating in their answers, imagining ways one might have led to the other.

- Burping – Onion breath
- Loud noise – Bicycle wreck
- Break up – New Relationship
- Fitting in – Feeling included

After playing for a while, ask the campers “Which comes first: forgiveness or an apology?” Once they have had time to share thoughts, Read Luke 15:11-32 together, pointing out that they father didn’t need to hear the child’s apology before showing grace and that the older sibling did not get an apology. Ask the campers how they feel about these dynamics and how forgiveness might be a personal or internal practice.

Try This: Ask the campers when they have forgiven someone before hearing an apology and how that happens.

Who is the Prodigal?

LEARN

Supplies: Bible

How: Read Luke 15:11-32 together, then explain to campers that the word “prodigal” means “rashly or wastefully extravagant.” Ask campers who qualifies as “prodigal” in the story. Encourage them to think about each of the characters and how they fit this definition. Finally, if you haven’t arrived there naturally, move the discussion towards God. Ask the campers what the story might say about how God loves us and how God’s grace be accurately described as prodigal.

Try This: Use sheets of paper to make visual lists for the following characters: Son, Father, and God. Write out the reasons campers give for categorizing each character as either prodigal or not so that you have a visual for campers.

Forgiveness Court

LEARN

Supplies: Bibles

How: Explain to campers that they have a chance to put the characters in today’s scripture on trial to determine whether they are worthy of forgiveness and grace. Divide campers into two teams: the prosecution and the defense. Invite the prosecution to come up with their reasons for why the younger brother, older brother, and father in Luke 15:11-32 are not worthy of forgiveness or grace. Invite the defense to come up with their rationale for why these three characters are worthy of forgiveness or grace. Give each team at least one Bible so that they can consult the Luke passage as they prepare their arguments. Once they have had time to prepare, announce that court is in session. Starting with the younger brother, ask the prosecution and defense to argue their cases against each character. Afterwards, spend some time talking about the different arguments and how their opinions were impacted by the debate. Ask the campers how it feels to know that God’s grace and forgiveness for us do not require a court room or trial but are freely given.

Try This: If you have time and a group that seems to handle tough questions well, consider adding the following question: How does it feel to know that God offers forgiveness and grace to others with no trial attached?

Awkward Acceptance

CREATE LEARN

Supplies: Large paper, copy paper, markers

How: Ask the campers how they feel about receiving both apologies and forgiveness. Assure them that it can be awkward and difficult for everyone. On a large piece of paper, ask the campers to brainstorm ways they can respond when someone apologizes to them. Be sure and not promote any one idea from the list, assuring campers that every relationship and apology is unique and we all respond in different ways. After they have completed this list, ask them to brainstorm ways to respond when someone forgives us. Once both lists are created, go back and invite the campers to identify which ones work best for the following prompts, or allow them to add extra answers if needed to meet the scenario in the prompt.

- When you feel terrible about what you did and someone says: "I forgive you"
- When a friend apologizes for something that didn't bother me at all
- When someone apologizes but I'm not ready to forgive them yet
- When someone gives a fake apology or non-apology
- When someone apologizes for something so terrible that I may never be over it
- Invite the campers to write their favorite or most comfortable responses for each on a piece of paper to keep and reflect on. This can even be a cheat sheet for how to best respond in these situations for the future.
- Finally, divide the campers into pairs and invite them to make up a scenario. One will apologize and the other will respond. Then, let them switch it up, with one offering forgiveness and the other responding.

Try This: You could bring everyone back together to share the experience of the practices apologies and receiving forgiveness.

Gifts of Grace

SERVE CREATE

Supplies: paper, markers, other basic craft supplies

How: Point out that God's gift of grace is something we not only receive but can participate in. Because God forgives us, we can extend forgiveness and love to others.

Invite campers to brainstorm ways that they might extend an act of grace to the rest of the camp community this week. Give examples like: we could hold the doors open for people as they enter the dining area and welcome them with words like "God loves you and you are forgiven!"

Let campers know that you have paper, markers, and other craft supplies to aid them in whatever project they choose. Once they decide upon their act of grace, give them time to create whatever signs or other objects they may need. Spend some time going over or rehearsing the plan so that campers know where/when to meet and what to do.

Try This: If you have additional group time today (either in official group meetings or by sitting together at a meal, etc.), take a few minutes to debrief this experience. How did it feel to offer grace to the whole camp?

Forgiveness Received

PRAY

Supplies: paper, pens, crayons/markers

How: Explain to campers that apologies and forgiveness have incredible power to heal our hearts and reset the paths of our lives. Point out that while we often focus on how we apologize to or forgive others, we also need to receive both forgiveness and apologies.

Invite campers to spend some time in reflection focused on the following questions:

- What apology do I need to hear from someone right now? What apology would heal my heart? -or-
- What forgiveness do I need right now? What words of forgiveness from another would help me to forgive myself?

Encourage campers to write or draw their answer to at least one of those questions. Give campers physical space to spread out and consider playing some soft music to fill the silence.

Try This: When campers are finished, invite them to take turns sharing one or two words that express how the prayer exercise made them feel.

Supplies: Lyrics to Amazing Grace

How: Explain to campers that many of the hymns and songs of the faith were written as prayers to God and that today you're going to pray together using the words of Amazing Grace.

Begin by reading the lyrics together, and allowing the campers to share words or images that jump out to them. Ask if there are any words or images that make them uncomfortable. For any uncomfortable phrasing, ask the campers what they think the writer might have been thinking about or feeling when they wrote them.

Invite the campers to read the words together as a prayer, reflecting on God's grace in their life and when there are words or phrasing that is uncomfortable for them, praying for those who feel that way and are seeking God's presence. End the prayer with an Amen.

Try This: You can make this a more meditative prayer experience by encouraging campers to lay down and listen to a recording of Amazing Grace. See the following Story Resources for a suggested version or use your own favorite.



Story Resources

Amazing Grace, Willie Nelson (21 Classic Christmas Favorites, 2015)

Amazing Grace (Momentum Pictures, 2006): This film tells the story of the abolitionist campaign against slavery in Great Britain. It includes the experiences of John Newton, author of the hymn "Amazing Grace," who was a captain on a slave ship but who became an abolitionist following his conversion to Christianity.



Day 4: Linked in Truth

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Exodus 18:5-24

Scripture Focus: Exodus 18:17-18

Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “What you are doing isn’t good. You will end up totally wearing yourself out, both you and these people who are with you. The work is too difficult for you. You can’t do it alone.

Theological Summary: We all need healthy relationships in which we can speak honestly about difficult things. Those who are honest with us in loving ways help us to grow into the people God calls us to be.

Today, campers will...

- Explore how honest conversations deepen healthy relationships
- Ponder how receiving Spirit-led truth helps us grow
- Discuss the challenges everyone faces when one tries to do it all
- Consider the benefits of relationships like Jethro and Moses in their own lives

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Clean Up Crew	PLAY SERVE	Many hands make lighter work
__ Truth or Consequences	PLAY	Trust game
__ Defense!	PLAY LEARN	Dangers of deflecting
__ Truth Hurts or Helps?	CREATE LEARN	Evaluating truth-telling
__ Reboot	LEARN CREATE	Retelling the Exodus story
__ Tending our Spirits	PRAY CREATE	Brainstorming Self-Care
__ Circle of Trust	PRAY	Journaling Prayer

Leader Notes: Some in your group may have never experienced safety and honesty in their relationships with friends or family. Take care not to assume that everyone in your group feels this way about one another after a few days of camp.

Prayer: God of Truth and Compassion, help us to be and become the kind of friends who both fiercely loving and fiercely honest with one another so that our relationships are places of safety and growth. Amen.

Daily Activities

Clean Up Crew

PLAY **SERVE**

Supplies: whatever items or trash you have at hand in your meeting space

How: Before your group meets, spend some time messing up your space (scatter your group supplies around the room, toss trash out of the trash can, etc. Or, if you meet outside, cover the chairs/benches or other seating with leaves, grass, and any supplies you've brought with you).

When the group arrives, ask for a volunteer who would be willing to clean up the space on their own. If you have no volunteers, select a camper and ask them to do the cleaning. Feel free to warn them beforehand if you think they might get upset by the request.

After a couple of minutes, if others have not jumped in to help, ask the whole group if they think the work could be done faster or better with everyone doing their part. Encourage everyone to jump in and clean up the space.

Once your area is clean, use these questions to debrief:

- What does it feel like to be the only person doing a big job?
- Share a time you found yourself doing a big job all by yourself?
- Why do we sometimes hesitate to ask others for help?

Try This: Invite the group to make a list of people in their lives who do too much and could use help in their work.

Truth or Consequences

PLAY

Supplies: Bandanna or blindfold

How: Invite a camper who is willing to be blindfolded to step away from the group until you call them back. Once they have stepped away, explain to the rest of your group that they need to quickly set up a simple obstacle course. After the simple course has been set, explain that when their peer returns to the space, they will be blindfolded and instructed to ask questions

about how to maneuver through the course without bumping into obstacles. Let the group decide if they will always tell the truth or always lie when asked questions. (Stress that, if lying, their answers should never put their peer in danger -- their goal will be to make them touch obstacles, not trip over them).

Once the decision is made, go get the camper and place a blindfold on them. Let them know that they must walk through an obstacle course, finding their way based on the answers given to questions they can ask (ex: Should I step forward? How many steps? Should I turn left?). Also let them know that you will walk with them to make sure they don't trip or fall.

After a few minutes of asking questions and getting answers, ask the blindfolded student how they feel things are going. Do they think they are close to the end? Have they bumped into obstacles? Do they think the group is being truthful with their answers or being dishonest?

Take the blindfold off the student and help the group debrief using these prompts:

- What are the potential consequences of having friends who don't tell us the truth?
- How can we know when our friends are truthful or not?
- How can truthful friends who care about us help us learn and grow?

Try This: If you have extra time, you can mix this game up by letting each individual decide whether to answer questions honestly or dishonestly -- so that the blindfolded camper gets a mix of good advice and bad advice as they move through the obstacle course. This has the potential to deepen your debrief at the end of the game.

Defense!

PLAY **LEARN**

Supplies: Bucket or can, paper, pens, tape

How: Divide the campers into two groups and divide them into separate spaces to plan for this activity. Give one group paper and pens and ask them to write affirmations or complements about the members of the other team. They can keep them general or make them personal but if they are about individuals there must be an equal number for each person. Explain that they will be delivering the messages by rolling

them up into paper balls and tossing them into a large container. Give the other group a trash can, basket, or other container and explain that it will be their job to protect the container using their paper. They can tape it together to make bigger pieces, but everyone must always be holding at least one piece of paper, and none can ever touch the ground, or they lose it.

Bring the groups together and explain that one group will be trying to put paper balls in the container and the other group will be trying to defend. You can put a line on the ground around the container to keep all campers out of that space to make it a little more difficult.

Play for about a minute, then stop and ask the group protecting the container to collect all the papers inside, flatten them out and read them together. Ask the group that was throwing to collect any paper from the ground and flatten out those pages. Bring everyone together and ask each group how they feel about the activity. Since they each had some different expectations there should be some confusion or conflicting experiences. Ask those who were defending what they think might be on the other pieces of paper and if they would like to see them. Ask those who wrote the messages how it felt to have your kind words rejected. Ask all the campers how we can be better and receiving words of appreciation and words of challenge from others, trusting that both can help us grow.

Try This: You can let the campers who wrote the words of affirmation decide if they get shared or not. If you have time, ask campers when they have tried to support someone or connect with someone and felt rejected.

Truth Hurts or Helps? CREATE LEARN

Supplies: Bible

How: Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 18:5-24 aloud. Explain to your group that Moses' father-in-law gives him some tough truth about how he is running things in the Israelite camp and suggests a better way to do things. Point out that while this advice is honest and caring, Moses could have taken it differently and been upset with the guidance. Invite the campers to take turns giving a creative, negative response, imagining how this conversation could have gone badly. Cue each camper who wants to take a turn by saying, "Moses, you can do better."

Use the following questions to dive deeper:

- Why do you think Moses was able to receive Jethro's words without being cranky?
- What is the difference between hurtful and helpful truth telling?
- Who can we share with others in a way that is not hurtful?
- How can we hear the words of others without being defensive?

Try This: At the end of this conversation, encourage campers to think of pop culture examples of truth-telling that are hurtful and helpful.

Reboot LEARN CREATE

Supplies: Bibles or printouts of Exodus 18:5-24, paper, pens

How: Divide campers into groups of two to four. Give each group a Bible or printout of Exodus 18:5-24, then ask them to rewrite the story in our modern context. They can change the occupation of characters into things that make more sense for today (ex: Moses as a community organizer, Pharaoh as a nation's president, etc.). Provide paper and pen to write down our outline the story reboots.

After groups have had some time to work, invite each to present. Pause after each and invite listeners to share the things they appreciated. Afterwards, ask the campers if the retelling helped them hear anything new in the story or interpret anything differently.

Try This: Ask groups to write their new versions of the Exodus text as scripts so that they can act out the story. If there is time and excitement, let the groups film their versions of the story. Some of these could also be used in worship to share the scripture.

Tending Our Spirits PRAY CREATE

Supplies: Large sheets of paper, markers

How: Explain to campers that one of the things Moses' father-in-law reminded him about was his own need to rest and avoid overwork. Today we call that a need for self-care. Ask the campers to brainstorm two lists of self-care activities with one being activities that require resources or cost money (massages, vacations, movies) and those that are free (walks outside, quiet time, attending Church).

Ask the campers which self-care activities are the most interesting to them, what is most helpful for them, and how they practice self-care at home. See if there are things that sound relaxing to some and exhausting or anxiety provoking to others. Ask them if there is a difference between doing nothing and self-care, and how they know the difference between self-care and not caring for ourselves. For example, we could plan a “do nothing day” to relax, but if we don’t shower, brush our teeth, or clean up our messes for a couple days, it’s probably not healthy. Invite the campers to think about what they can do when they get home to be better at self-care.

Try This: Either for your small group or for the camp as a whole, consider compiling and sharing these lists in a way that campers can return home with all the ideas. For example: take pictures of the lists and share them, rewrite them and make copies for everyone, etc.

Circle of Trust

PRAY

Supplies: Paper, pens

How: Invite campers to spend some time journaling or sketching about the people who make up their own personal “circle of trust.” Encourage them to think of this journaling experience as a prayer of gratitude, thanking God for the friends, family, and others in their life who give trustworthy advice and who genuinely care.

After campers have had the opportunity to write these prayers, gather in a circle and ask each camper to share one word about how it feels to have a circle of trust. Close this prayer time by saying your own prayer or by simply saying “Amen”.

Try This: You can create a relaxing and peaceful journal experience by adding music in your group space. Play something soothing like a meditation playlist from Spotify so that there isn’t silence as your group writes.



Story Resources

Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (Warner Brothers 1971): Willy Wonka is looking for someone he can trust, and the winners of his contest who get to tour his candy factory have been bribed to steal his secrets. Who is false? Will truth prevail?

Aladdin (Disney, 2019 - live action version; 1996 - animated version): a street-wise young man is given wishes by a genie and uses them to pretend he is a prince so that he can court the sultan’s daughter. When the truth comes out, things get wild.



Day 5: Linked to Love

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: 1 John 4: 7-9; 19

Scripture Focus: 1 John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let’s love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. The person who doesn’t love does not know God, because God is love.

Theological Summary: When people say: “God is love,” they are referring to this set of verses from 1 John. If we don’t love others, we don’t love God. All the love in the world flows out of God’s love for creation, which includes us!

Today, campers will...

- Be reminded that love is from God and that God’s love is an example of how to love others
- Be sent to share God’s love in their relationships

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
___ Packing My Bag	PLAY	Word game
___ (Un)Average Love Songs	CREATE SERVE	Making a camp playlist
___ Love Flows	LEARN	Reviewing and Sharing
___ Interlinked	PRAY	Naming connections
___ Feel the Love	PRAY	Giving thanks for love

Leader Notes: Take care to remember that there may be some campers who didn’t experience love this week or who are worried about going home. This can be a tender day for many reasons, so approach your campers with compassion and care.

Prayer: God, it has been a great week filled with love, which means it has been a great week filled with you! Thank you for giving us love here and every other place we experience it. Amen.

Daily Activities

Packing My Bag

PLAY

Supplies: None

How: For this word game, you'll invite campers to share what they are packing in their bag for home. In order for their answer to be "correct" they must match the "trick" you use in your first example. As campers participate, encourage the group to work together to figure out the "trick" being used in each round:

Round 1: words with double letters inside. Ex: I'm packing my bag full of sweets.

Round 2: words that start with the same letter. Ex: I'm packing my bag full of tasty treats.

Round 3: words that end with the same letter. Ex: I'm packing my bag with a green bean.

In each round, have campers go around the circle and share their packing attempts. If they meet the rule, say "yes. You can pack that." If they do not, say "no. You can't bring that." Encourage them to keep trying until they figure out the rule -- but be prepared to share the secret if campers start getting overly frustrated.

After a few rounds of the game, invite campers to share something new they've received or learned that they are truly bringing home with them.

Try This: If you have time, let campers make up other "tricks" but make them share the solution with you before the round starts so that its not just "what I like." No need for hurt feelings on the last day of camp.

(Un)Average Love Songs **CREATE SERVE**

Supplies: Paper, pens

How: Explain that there are lots of different kinds of love and that most love we experience in life is not the romantic kind. Encourage students to think of other kinds of love and loving relationships (friendships, mentorship, family, etc.).

Invite campers to create their own playlist of songs that fit these other types of non-romantic love. Combine all the playlists from the campers by having a scribe write the titles and artists on a large piece of paper.

Try This: You could combine all the playlists and (after checking for content) send it home with campers or mail if afterwards as a reminder to keep sharing God's love with everyone and in all our different types of relationships.

Love Flows

LEARN

Supplies: Beads or rocks

How: Start by reading 1 John 4:7-9, 19 together. Give each camper a bead or small rock for each day of camp. Place some extras in a pile in the middle of your group space. For each day of camp, invite campers to think of a way they shared love with someone and place a bead in the middle pile as a symbol. As they place beads, ask them to think about ways they have received love and take a different bead as a symbol of the love shared with them. Repeat this pattern for each day of camp. You can remind them of the scripture, themes, and major camp events for each day. If you used rocks instead of stones, you could all close by returning them to an appropriate place in nature. Remind campers that we can pour out all our love, trusting that God will refill us along the journey.

Try This: If you used beads, consider giving out some string or cord and allowing campers to make a bracelet or necklace to hold the beads and remind them of all the love they shared at camp.

Interlinking

PRAY

Supplies: None

How: With all your campers standing in a circle, invite them to put one hand on each hip. Begin by linking arms with one camper, sliding your left arm through their right arm, and then sharing a way you will feel linked to them after you leave camp. For example, "the great questions you asked will keep me linked to you" or "your sense of humor will keep me linked to you." It can even be something more specific like, "the smores we burnt will keep me linked to you." After this, move on to the next camper, switching arms each time. Invite the other camper you first linked to follow you through the circle, linking and sharing with each person. When you finish, join the circle so each camper can link with you. By the end, you should have reformed the circle. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving for all the connections that will keep you connected in God's love after camp.

Try This: If you want, try to stay connected to the first person, just speaking to each camper as you go, letting them link on to the end of the line so the circle is linked when you finish.

Feel the Love

PRAY

Supplies: Slips of paper & pens (optional)

How: Invite campers to sit or stand in a circle. Ask them to take turns (going around the circle or “popcorn style”) sharing a way that they felt loved at camp this week. Be sure to leave room for campers to stay silent if they are not comfortable sharing out loud.

After all who want to share have done so, end with a prayer like: “God, we know that all love comes from you. That means every time we felt love this week, we felt your presence among us. Thank you for the gift of love in our lives and thank you for showing yourself among us this week. Amen.”

Try This: Give campers slips of paper and pens. Invite them to write down places/ways they experienced love this week, rather than sharing them out loud. Invite campers to tuck those notes away in their bibles or pockets so that they can find them later and be reminded.



Story Resources

The BFG (Disney, 2016): The story of a loving friendship between a young orphan named Sophie and a Big Friendly Giant.

The BFG, Roald Dahl: The book upon which the above film is based.

Song Recommendations

There is no designated music time, theme song, or music guide for this curriculum. Below are recommendations to help you prepare for opening gatherings, worship presentations, or a music session with children. Most are readily available in hymnals or with a simple online search. Many have videos on YouTube which you can use to lead children should you lack music leaders.

Day 1: Linked through Acceptance

Luke 10:38-42

- Different Stokes (Alan Thicke, 1978)
- Would You Harbor Me (Sweet Honey in the Rock, 1995)
- We are One in the Spirit (Hymn)
- Trust in You (Lauren Daigle, 2015)
- All God's Creatures / Place in the Choir (Bill Stains, 1979)
- True Colors (Cyndi Lauper, 1986)

Day 2: Linked and Present

Job 2:11-13

- In this Very Room (Hymn)
- Living in the Moment (Jason Mraz)
- Precious Lord, Take My Hand (Hymn)
- You've Got a Friend in Me (Randy Newman, 1995)
- You've Got a Friend (Carole King, 1971)
- Friends (Michael W. Smith, 1989)
- I'll Be There for You (The Rembrandts, 1995)
- Don't Give Up (Peter Gabriel, 1986)

Day 3: Linked by Grace

Luke 15:11-32

- Pray for Forgiveness (Alecia Keys, 2009)
- Amazing Grace (Hymn)
- It's All Right (Indigo Girls, 1997)
- Good to Me (Audry Assad, 2013)
- God Will Work It Out (Maverick City Music, 2021)
- Forgiveness (Matthew West, 2012)
- Your Grace and Mercy (Mississippi Mass Choir, 1993)
- The Forgiveness Song (Veggietales, 1995)

Day 4: Linked in Truth

Exodus 18:5-24

- Change My Heart, O God (Vineyard Music, 1994)
- Pass it On (Hymn)
- Your Peace Will Make Us One (Audry Assad, 2019)
- Seasons of Love (Rent, 1996)
- Whatever It Takes (Imagine Dragons, 2017)
- Never Gonna Let You Down (Colbie Caillat, 2014)
- Landslide (Fleetwood Mac, 1975)
- Welcome Back (John Sebastian, 1976)
- The Facts of Life (Alan Thicke, 1979)

Day 5: Linked to Love

1 John 4: 7-9; 19

- Weave (Hymn)
- Many Gifts - One Spirit of Love (Andra Moran, 2012)
- Many Gifts - One Spirit (Allen Pote, 2016)
- Love is Greater Than Fear (The Many, 2020)
- Jesus, Lover of My Soul (Hillsong, 1993)

Arts and Crafts

Sculpt the Rainbow

Supplies: Corrugated cardboard, scissors, acrylic paint, paint brushes

How: In advance, cut semi-circle shapes out of cardboard; they need to be at least 6 inches wide and at least 6 inches tall (at least three semi-circles per camper). Also cut a slot in each shape's top and bottom centers, 1 ½" long, and no more than ¼" wide. (They don't all need to be the exact same shape.) Invite campers to paint rainbow stripes on the semi-circles, following the curve of the outer line. The colors don't need to be the traditional rainbow colors, but each shape does need to be colorful. When the shapes have had time to dry, invite the campers to fit the shapes together using the slots, sculpting stacks of rainbows!

Beads, Beads, Beads

Supplies: Multiple colors of polymer clay, rolling pin, toothpicks, toaster oven (or other baking resource), butter knife

How: Invite the campers to choose three colors of polymer clay, and to roll a small portion of each color into a square roughly 2"x2". Layer the colors one on top of the other and trim the edges so that they all match. Roll the three layers of clay up into a sausage-shaped tube, and slice into circles ¼"-1/2" thick. (If no hole remains in the center, create one with a toothpick after the slicing.) If the circles flatten a bit in the process of slicing, roll a bit to get the roundness back. Bake according to clay package instructions. Invite the campers to observe and admire the way the distinct layers swirl and wrap around one another while remaining their own shade. Invite the campers to use the beads on their nametag lanyard, or to give away to others at camp.

Design and Dye

Supplies: Clear school glue, t-shirts (or other dyeable fabric object), mx dyes (tie dyes), soda ash, tubs, water, rubber gloves or tongs, washing machine, laundry detergent

How: Invite campers to use a bottle of clear school glue to draw/write on their t-shirts; they can use words like "linked" or other words from the week as well as shapes or patterns. Encourage them to press slightly with the tip of the glue bottle, to ensure that the glue is soaking into the fabric. Allow to dry (This could be overnight, depending on temperatures and humidity). While the glue dries, mix the dyes with soda ash in tubs according to the instructions on the dye box. Invite the campers to submerge their t-shirts in the dye baths for at least 15 minutes (or according to dye instructions), using gloves and/or tongs to protect their hands. Rinse the t-shirts in cold water, and wash in warm.

Try This: Follow all of the instructions above, but do it twice, using contrasting colors. Be sure to put the second set of images/patterns in another place on the t-shirt, so that at the end you can see the color contrast.

Painted Water

Supplies: Two containers of water, watercolor paints, water dropper (optional), brushes, 5x7" watercolor paper

How: Give each camper a piece of watercolor paper and invite them to drip water onto it. Encourage them to allow the drops or blobs to just be—they don't need to make shapes or a particular image. Invite the campers to add drips of very wet watercolors to each droplet, allowing the pigment to spread and settle within the drop, without spreading it or changing the shape. More than one color could go into a single drop. Invite the campers to observe the way the color moves, and possibly mixes. Invite them to share what they notice while they are working. Allow the paper to dry completely and then ask the campers how the droplets look at the end. Encourage them to notice how the colors have interacted and look to see if any of the droplets have linked to one another.

Jiggling Rainbows

Supplies: Two metal loaf pans, two small bowls, plastic wrap, 2-3 containers of flavored gelatin, a variety of fresh fruits in bite-sized pieces, water, way to heat water, mixing spoons, measuring cups, refrigerator, two dishes for serving, knife

How: Following the instructions on the package for “jiggler” gelatin, invite the campers to mix the gelatin with hot water. Invite the campers to mix the fruits together in the loaf pans and have them pour the gelatin mixtures over the top. Mix the gelatin and fruit slightly, making sure they are incorporated fully. Chill until the gelatin has a stiff, jiggly consistency. Set the pans in warm water to loosen the gelatin and flip **it** out onto a dish. Slice each loaf so that the carrying colors of fruit are visible in each piece, inviting each camper to enjoy one. Afterward, ask the campers how the snack would be different if only one kind of fruit were involved, or no fruit at all. Would it still be a rainbow? After the snack, encourage campers to keep an eye out for all the colors, hues, and shades that can be seen in God’s creation.

Multi-Day Activities

Breaking Chains

Supplies: Paper, markers, tape, or stapler.

How: Cut lots of paper strips, approximately eight inches long and one inch wide. Invite campers to write things they would like prayer for. These could be joys, worries, hopes, dreams, or fears. Form them into a paper chain and secure the ends so it hangs in a public space. Have extra slips of paper and markers available throughout the week. Invite campers to break a link and replace it with new prayer concerns as the week goes on. When they break a link, they keep it and include it in their personal prayers. This could be done as a “Morning Watch” practice, as part of cabin devotions, or even in worship. It could also be an ongoing opportunity through the entire summer.

Notes to Self

Supplies: Large envelopes, writing paper, scissors, markers, and stickers (optional).

How: In advance, cut the writing paper into quarters, making smaller papers. Give each camper an envelope and invite them to decorate it with their name and whatever patterns or images they choose. Give each camper a small stack of small paper and invite them to consider, each day, something positive that they have discovered or been reminded of about themselves. Write that discovery or reminder on one of the small papers and keep it in the envelope. Assure campers that their envelopes are private and encourage them to add at least one thing each day.

All the Angles

Supplies: Sidewalk chalk, a tall object in camp in a sunny spot.

How: Choose a tree (a pole or other very tall, narrow object will do), and observe the shadow it makes on the ground. Invite campers to trace the shadow with the chalk, making strong, visible lines. Invite the campers to revisit this same tree at different times of day throughout the week, tracing the shadow each time. Encourage the campers to observe the changes in the

angles and shapes of the shadow at different times of the day. What do they notice? It’s all from one tree, but does it always make the same impression? Do people always make the same shapes and impressions?

What Will You Stand Up For?

Supplies: Butcher paper, marker, sticky notes, writing utensils, and masking tape.

How: In advance, make an outline of the top half of a person on the butcher paper. Hang this outline in a community space and make the sticky notes and writing utensils available. Invite the campers to consider what or who needs someone to advocate on their behalf. Invite the campers to write their conclusions down on a sticky note and fill in the outline with it. Encourage the campers to do this every day, until the outline is full. Once it is full, invite the campers to review everything written there.

Secret Mission

Supplies: Slips of paper, pen (or printout of camp roster).

How: Explain that every camper will be given a secret mission that can be done throughout the week of camp. Tell the campers that they will be given a name and their job is to make sure that person feels welcome and appreciated at camp. You can let campers draw names in secret or assign them using preassigned envelopes. Some examples of a successful mission might include sitting with someone who is alone, inviting someone to join a game or go on a hike, or just hanging out together. After a few days, visit with campers about the challenges to this mission. Ask them about how we experience others’ motives and what the world might be like if we were all more intentional about making sure others were included.

Games

Floating Monkeys

Supplies: Plastic clothes hangers, a large pool of water.

How: This game can be played in many ways depending on your setting. In a large water container, kiddie pool, or at your camp's water recreation site, float a dozen plastic clothes hangers. Let campers take turns trying to link as many as possible by holding one to start, then hooking on others as they go, just like a "Barrel of Monkeys." With smaller children, you can use a shallow pool. Older campers might be able to do this using a hanger taped to the end of an oar. You could have a hanger on a rope and let campers on either end work together to manipulate it. Have fun adapting to your setting and seeing how many monkeys your campers can hook.

Link Tag

Supplies: None.

How: This is sometimes known as bump tag and involves every camper linking arms with a partner. Campers put their other hand on their hip, creating an "open link." Choose one pair to split, assigning one the role of chaser and making the other the runner. The runner can link arms with any "open link," making them safe. When a camper links on, the camper on the far side of the link becomes the runner and must leave. They can join any other available link, but not return to this particular pair. For a larger group, you can have multiple runners and chasers.

Detangler

Supplies: Four different colors of 10 – 20' rope.

How: Intertwine four different lengths of rope, making sure their ends are easily found. Have eight campers take hold of one end each. You can either let them work together to untangle the ropes or have other campers watching give the directions and dictate the action. To complete the task, all ropes must be stretched out with no knots.

Try This: You could use smaller lengths of plastic craft cord and have multiple sets for campers to untangle as a race. First, they tangle an opponent's set of cords, then swap. The first one to untie the other's mess of cords wins.

Questionable Power

Supplies: None.

How: Think of a position of power, such as "Camp Director" and then ask the campers to guess what your identity is. They can only ask questions in this format: "Does ____ do what you say?" They can ask as many questions as needed to guess your identity. Once they figure it out, let campers take turns thinking of a role and guessing each other's identity. After a while, spend a few minutes naming which roles had healthy amounts of authority, which ones had the least, and how each could be good or back depending on how their power is used.

Emoji Jousting

Supplies: None

How: Divide campers into two teams and line them up in single file lines facing each other about ten yards apart. Explain that they will pick a facial expression that they must hold the entire time as they walk across the empty space. Their goal is to make the person walking towards them change their expression. For example, if the person is acting mad, you want to make them smile. If they are smiling, you want to make them laugh or look confused. Once the first step is taken, a camper cannot change their facial expression till they reach the other side, or they lose the joust. Campers from each team cross the space walking slowly, passing each other, then starting a new line for their team. You can keep score or just have fun being silly. Afterward, you can have a conversation about the emotions we share and how we share them. Ask campers how the nonverbal expression of others makes them feel and impacts their relationships.

Group Building and Challenge Activities

Common Bonds

Supplies: None

How: Challenge the campers to find common bonds by having them line up based on connections. Start with something simple such as, “foods you like.” Campers must find someone who can answer the question the same as them. For example, two campers who like pizza can stand side by side or link arms. If one of those campers also likes sushi, they can link their other arm with another camper who also likes sushi. Here is a list of other prompts to try:

- Music you like
- Fears
- TV shows you watch
- Social media you follow
- Possible career one day

If a line is too easy for your group, you can challenge them to form a complete circle.

If the first prompt proves to be a big challenge, you might back up and do some simpler challenges like getting in line by birthday or height to get them working as a group.

Human Dominos

Supplies: Poster board (or cardboard), black markers

How: In advance, cut poster boards into large rectangles and draw on circles to create dominos big enough for a camper to hold across their body. 21 dominos will be enough to make a set that goes from double blank to double fives. 28 will give you up to double sixes. Divide the campers into two teams and give each eight dominos. Let them look over their dominos while you place the extras in a draw pile between them. Play begins with the team with the highest double placing that tile. For a tile to be played, a camper must be holding it flat against their chest. Play can proceed from any of the four directions off the first domino, assuming there is space going down

towards the ground, or campers can work together to lift each other to play upward. The more campers participating, the more creative they can get in playing vertically. Afterwards, spend some time talking about the struggles and successes in the activity. Ask the campers how the physical challenges impacted their game decisions.

Crossy Camper


Supplies: Boundary markers

How: This is really two activities happening at the same time. Set up relay races with four teams crossing your play space. Put two teams side by side going in one direction and two other teams facing them and racing the opposite direction. Campers must move to the opposite side, then come back to their starting line before the next person goes. You can rotate running, crawling, crabwalk, rolling, etc. At the same time, have a small group of campers trying to “cross the road” from one side of the relay space to the other. Explain that those crossing can only move one step at a time in any direction and only when a teammate tells them to move. This will work best if they take turns giving each other directions. You can adapt this based on the size of your group. After playing spend some time reflecting on what made this challenging and the impact of other people’s priorities and focus impacting your own.

Silent Count

Supplies: None

How: Assign each camper their own number between 1 and 100 and have them stand in a large circle with lots of space in the middle. Tell them the range of numbers but no one should know what another has. Explain that they will be forming a line across the space without talking and without using hand gestures. Whoever thinks they have the lowest number will step into the circle first, then others will step in as they think it is probably their turn. Once everyone has lined up, ask them to share their numbers and see how close they got. Play a few times, pausing between to let the



campers strategize how they can do it faster and with more accuracy on their next attempt. Afterward, spend some time debriefing the challenges involved and what strategies were most helpful.

Try This: “The Mind” is a simple card game from Pandasaurus Games that offers a similar challenge in a table game setting.

Finger Power

Supplies: None

How: Invite one camper to lay flat on the ground with their chin tucked and arms crossed. Ask the other campers to kneel around them and hold their hands. Explain that each person will only use their middle and index fingers to help lift the camper in the middle. You can use a yoga mat, or position campers so that areas of personal space are protected. Remind camper being lifted to stay as stiff as possible. On the count of three, have the group slowly lift the volunteer about six inches off the ground, then slowly lower them. You can let campers take turns being lifted. Afterward, remind them that groups have more power than needed for most tasks and that great potential lies within us all.

Science and Nature

Living Soil

Supplies: Sheets of Paper, Small magnifying glass (optional).

Leader Prep: Browse and/or take some notes on the Wikipedia articles on Mycelium, Soil, and Microorganisms so you can help answer camper questions or be better equipped learn and be amazed together.

How: Have each camper collect a handful of soil (from around some tree roots if possible) from a different location and place it on a piece of paper. Have each camper identify as many things as they can in their soil (rocks, dirt, bugs, twigs, etc.). Let the campers compare their soil samples, looking to see the differences between them. Let the campers know that their soil actually is alive, even though it is tiny. Explain that in each of their handfuls of soil, there are billions of bacteria, miles of mycelium (root-like parts of mushroom/fungus that look generally like white threads if visible at all), and hundreds of other types of microorganisms. Let them know these all work together so that plants can grow in the soil and that without them, roots wouldn't be able to get the nutrients they need or hold the water to give plants a drink. Have the campers return their soil samples to where they retrieved them and collect the paper for recycling.

Debriefing Questions:

- What type of joy could you experience as an earthworm as you get to taste every part of the soil as it runs through your entire body?
- What do all these microorganisms have you wondering about?
- How might microorganisms be serving God?
- What relationships are you a part of which help to give life to others?

The Night's Sky

Supplies: A dark location, telescope (optional).

Leader Prep: Browse and take some notes on the Wikipedia articles on Galaxies, Black Holes, Binary Stars, and Supernovas so you can help answer camper questions or be better equipped to learn and be amazed together.

How: On a clear night, take campers outside to the darkest part of your camp property, let your eyes adjust to the dark (10-15 minutes), and have the campers let you know what they can see (stars, planets, moon, satellites, shooting star, airplanes, etc.). Have the campers wonder about what is also in the night sky that they can't see. Tell the campers about galaxies, black holes, binary stars, and supernovas. Ask the campers to share what they imagine might be out in the night sky or what they have heard about that is in space.

Debriefing Questions:

- Where is the place in space, you'd be most interested in seeing for yourself?
- How does it make you feel to know space is so incredibly big and God still finds you important amidst it?
- What do you imagine aliens might be like if they exist?
- What can we learn about living faithful lives by studying God's Creation of space?

Reduce – Reuse – Recycle

Supplies: An Item from Each Camper’s Bunk.

Leader Prep: Browse and/or take some notes on the Wikipedia articles on Waste Hierarchy and Recycling so you can help answer camper questions or be better equipped to learn and be amazed together.

How: Have the campers each bring an item from their bunk – anything they want at all that was made by people. Tell them as stewards of God’s Creation, we have to think about the things we have and what might become of them. Have the campers each identify what types of materials make up their item such as plastic, metal, paper, cardboard, natural fibers, etc. Look up together how long the materials take to decompose (or have the leader make a list ahead of time to share). Have the campers each take a handful of soil and imagine what the soil would be like if their item were in it. Would it be safe to grow food in, play on, etc.? Talk about each of their items as a group and what would happen to the item in the future. Can it be reused or recycled? Could it be repurposed? Encourage the campers to be creative. Invite them to imagine what other materials their items could be made of that would be gentler on the planet.

Debriefing Questions:

- What are ways you can imagine us reducing the number of things we have?
- How have you reused something in a different way than it was originally meant to be used?
- What is the best way to get rid of things that can’t be reduced, reused, or recycled?
- How does our usage of items affect other people, animals, and all of God’s Creation on Earth?
- What are ways we can get companies to make products that can be recycled or biodegraded?

Animal Observation

Supplies: Notepads, Writing Utensils, Magnifying Glasses (optional).

Leader Prep: Browse and/or take some notes on Wikipedia articles about some of the common animals in your area so you can help answer camper questions or be better equipped to learn and be amazed together.

How: Have each camper (or pairs of campers) find an animal(s) to observe from a safe distance and with adequate supervision (cat, ants, bird, fish, frog, insect, spider, squirrel, deer, etc.). Have the campers write observations about their animal in a notebook that can be added to later in the week or by other campers through the summer. They can record the size, shape, color, how it moves, what it is doing, if it is eating anything, how many of the animal(s) there are, etc. Once done, have the campers imagine what it might feel like if they were the animal. Have them write down what a day would be like if they were that animal. When complete, share with one another.

Debriefing Questions:

- How do we as people affect the daily life of your observed animal in good or bad ways?
- How much do you think people might have taken away the natural habitat of your animal?
- What questions do you have about your animal?
- What can animals teach us about connecting with each other or caring for God’s creation?

Compost Jar

Supplies: Large clear container with a wide opening, compostable materials, water (optional).

Leader Prep: Browse and/or take some notes on the Wikipedia article on Compost so you can help answer camper questions or be better equipped to learn and be amazed together.

How: Near the beginning of the week, have the campers gather leaves, fruit peels, leftover bread, grass clippings, twigs, wood chips, eggshells, and other natural materials. Put them together into the container and if completely dry, add water until it is the dampness of a wrung-out sponge. Explain to the campers you are making compost, turning waste into soil to grow new plants! Place the container in an area that will get sunlight and leave it until near the end of the week of camp. Come back and observe together what has changed. Feel it to note its temperature. Notice how it smells. Observe any changes in the color or height of the material in the container. Talk about how it has changed over the course of the week. When done, add it to your camp's composting material or dump it out outdoors to let it finish composting naturally.

Debriefing Questions:

- How does composting differ from throwing things into an airtight trash bag?
- What do you imagine is happening that we can't see in the compost?
- What would happen if everyone decided to compost?
- How can you support composting at your home, community, school, church, and at this camp?
- How might composting be a spiritual practice or a way to serve God?

Linked by Love Journal

Journaling can be a powerful spiritual practice, allowing campers to process the concepts being presented at camp and to hear what God is saying to them directly about their unique concerns and situations.

The following pages offer some reflection questions, particularly for older campers. For younger campers, you might ask more general questions that are the same each day, such as

- What was your favorite part of the day today?
- What did you learn about God today?
- Did you hear or do anything today that made you think of something God might want you to start or stop doing?

Emphasize that each camper's journal is sacred and should be left alone by other campers. If you think journals would be safer if the counselor gathered them and put them in a safe place, have counselors do so.

Whether or not you use any of the suggested questions, consider setting aside time for journaling. Tell campers that their journals are just for them. If they would rather draw than write words, that's fine. Journals are tools for getting in touch with ourselves and with God.

Linked by Love Journal

Day 1: Linked in Love

Colossians 3:12-14

Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Reflect:

- If we could turn emotions into clothes which would be your favorite to wear and which one would you never want to wear?
- How do we "put on love"?
- Who in your life shows you the fruit of the Spirit?

Respond:

Draw a stick figure or picture of yourself dressed up in clothes that represent different emotions. You can draw faces or emojis on the clothes to show the emotion or use colors that feel right to you.

Linked by Love Journal

Day 2: Linked through Acceptance

Luke 10:38-42

While Jesus and his disciples were traveling, Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him as a guest. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his message. By contrast, Martha was preoccupied with getting everything ready for their meal. So Martha came to him and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to prepare the table all by myself? Tell her to help me." The Lord answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part. It won't be taken away from her."

Reflect:

- Who in your life does things very differently from you?
- What do you do when someone wants to do things a different way?
- How can we understand people who are different from us in better ways?
- How can we make sure everyone feels welcome?

Respond:

Draw a picture of a welcome that would make you feel special.

Linked by Love Journal

Day 3: Linked and Present

Job 2:11-13

When Job's three friends heard about all this disaster that had happened to him, they came each one from his home—Eliphaz from Teman, Bildad from Shuah, and Zophar from Naamah. They agreed to come so they could console and comfort him. When they looked up from a distance and didn't recognize him, they wept loudly. Each one tore his garment and scattered dust above his head toward the sky. They sat with Job on the ground seven days and seven nights, not speaking a word to him, for they saw that he was in excruciating pain.

Reflect:

- When you feel sad or upset, are there words that make you feel better?
- When you feel sad or upset, are there people who can make you feel better without words?
- How might it feel to be present with someone without saying anything?

Respond:

Draw a picture of someone being cared for without words.

Linked by Love Journal

Day 4: Linked by Grace

Luke 15:20-24

“While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. His father ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him. Then his son said, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! Fetch the fattened calf and slaughter it. We must celebrate with feasting because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

Reflect:

- When has someone shown you love even though you made a big mistake?
- Is it easier to stay mad at someone or forgive them?
- How can we keep ourselves safe and show grace at the same time?

Respond:

Draw a heart on one side of this page, then put dots on it for different things you are still angry with people about. For each dot, put your pencil on it, and think about how it might feel to forgive that hurt as you draw a line from the dot into the empty space. Think about each line as a prayer to God to help you figure out forgiveness.

Linked by Love Journal

Day 5: Linked in Truth

Exodus 18:17-19a, 24

Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing isn't good. You will end up totally wearing yourself out, both you and these people who are with you. The work is too difficult for you. You can't do it alone. Now listen to me and let me give you some advice. And may God be with you!"

Moses listened to his father-in-law's suggestions and did everything that he had said.

Reflect:

- Who do you trust with big questions?

- Who are the people outside your family that give you good advice?

- Who might get good advice from you?

Respond:

Draw a box, then draw or write the names of people who give you good advice or who you trust to help you learn new things. Once you have placed all the people, color the box to look like a present. You will be able to see the names through the decorations.

Linked by Love Journal

Day 6: Linked to Change

Philemon 1:8-17

“Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to command you to do the right thing, I would rather appeal to you through love. I, Paul—an old man, and now also a prisoner for Christ Jesus— appeal to you for my child Onesimus. I became his father in the faith during my time in prison. He was useless to you before, but now he is useful to both of us. I’m sending him back to you, which is like sending you my own heart. I considered keeping him with me so that he might serve me in your place during my time in prison because of the gospel. However, I didn’t want to do anything without your consent so that your act of kindness would occur willingly and not under pressure. Maybe this is the reason that Onesimus was separated from you for a while so that you might have him back forever— no longer as a slave but more than a slave—that is, as a dearly loved brother. He is especially a dearly loved brother to me. How much more can he become a brother to you, personally and spiritually in the Lord!”

So, if you really consider me a partner, welcome Onesimus as if you were welcoming me.

Reflect:

- How does it feel to be in charge of other people or tell them what to do?
- What can go wrong when telling others what they should do?
- How can we invite others to live like God wants us to without being cranky or rude?

Respond:

Draw a picture of a good leader giving others direction or guiding them.

Linked by Love Journal

Day 7: Linked to Love

1 John 4: 7-9; 19

Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love. This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him.

We love because God first loved us.

Reflect:

- I wonder who has taught you what love feels and looks like?
- Whom can you help by showing them God's love?
- What was your favorite Bible story this week and what does it teach us about God's love?

Respond:

Draw a picture from your favorite Bible story this week or a picture of a time at camp when someone showed God's love.

Connecting Camp to Home



We know that the most powerful influence on any person's faith life is those closest to them. For most children and youth, that is their family. All the camps, youth groups, and VBS programs in all the world can't equal the power of faith shaped by family and mentors.

The goal of these activities is to provide some practices for families at home. The themes follow the daily themes from camp. This provides another opportunity for campers to share their experiences with family and their family to join the conversation.

Each day has the same outline:

Scripture to Read – This can be done individually or as a family. You can use the other activities and questions to dive deeper, or just discuss the reading.

Questions for Reflection – Whether it is a meal time, in the car, or an intentional conversation together, these questions invite storytelling and idea sharing.

Activity to Share – Every activity is different. Some are more complicated. Some require a little planning. All of them will create quality family connections.

Challenges for Living it Out – These can be used for reflection in the moment, as an invitation to share stories from the past, or as goals to vision around in the future.

You don't have to do these in any order, or even have to do them all. The hope is that these questions, activities, and challenges will provide a buffet or options for your family.

These could also be activities you share with other families in your church community. There is no wrong way to use these daily sheets. They are for your use, and our prayer is that they will help campers and families grow closer to each other and to God.

Take Home Sheets



Day 1: Linked through Acceptance

Scripture to Read: Luke 10:38-42

Questions for Reflection:

- How do you feel when others do something a different way from you?
- What are you most likely to complain about out loud to others?
- When have you been embarrassed by your own complaints?
- How does affirming those who are different make you feel?
- How do you feel about Jesus regularly affirming those who were different?

Activities to Share:

1. Throw a party! Make plans that intentionally take into consideration the needs of everyone who will come, imagining the different things that make people feel comfortable and welcome. How might this party celebrate the diversity of those who attend?
2. Ask each person to make a list of times they felt shamed by others or were told they were wrong for doing things their own way. Once everyone has had time to reflect, invite anyone who is willing to share their list. Listen for common themes or experiences. Spend some time affirming each other for being true to themselves and brainstorm ways we can help each other be our true self.

Challenges for Living It Out:

- Think of someone who does things differently from you and try to figure out why.
- When you find yourself judging someone, ask yourself, “Why do they do that?”
- Chose a friend who is not like you and do a project together.
- For one week, keep track of the tangible ways you serve others and the ways you emotionally care for others. See which is more common for you.
- For one week, keep track of how a loved one cares for you emotionally and what tangible things they do to support you. See which is more common for them.

Take Home Sheets



Day 2: Linked and Present

Scripture to Read: Job 2:11-13

Questions for Reflection:

- How do you feel about having people around when you are emotional?
- Who makes you feel safe or comforted when you are upset?
- When have you needed to just sit in silence or at least not talk for a while?
- In what ways can people support each other without directly communicating?
- When have you felt God's presence through another person?

Activities to Share:

1. Practice sitting in silence with another person or a small group. You might just meditate, or you could each be working on a different project. This could be a craft, journaling, or working in a garden. Afterwards, discuss the feeling of having others around.
2. On a large piece of paper, invite each person to write things others have said to them that would have been better left unspoken. Once everyone has had time to add as many examples as they want, take a large black marker and "redact" or color over each phrase, one at a time. Some phrases might just need a couple of words left out. Some might be covered over completely. Let the group discuss each with the person who wrote it having the final say. Closes with a prayer of thanks to God for always being with us through others, even when we say the wrong thing.

Challenges for Living It Out:

- Set a time each day to pause and practice silence.
- Spend time with someone else in prayer without talking to each other.
- Make "God is with you" cards or a craft such as bracelets or crocheted shawls to share with people when words are not enough or might be hurtful.

Take Home Sheets



Day 3: Linked by Grace

Scripture to Read: Luke 15:11-32

Questions for Reflection:

- What does the parent forgiving before the runaway apologizes tell us about forgiveness?
- Is it easier for you to forgive little things or big hurts?
- What can someone do to make it easier for you to forgive them?
- How do you feel when others are forgiving and you are not ready?
- When has forgiveness changed your life?

Activities to Share:

1. Make a “grace jar” and put a bowl of rocks by it. Anytime you are thankful that someone showed you grace or forgave you, drop a rock in. See how fast the jar can fill. Any time you refuse to forgive someone or find yourself holding a grudge, take one out. Check in with your family or group on occasion to talk about the status of your jar and your own feelings around grace.
2. For a week, practice using the word “grace” outside of praying for a meal. Try to name it when you see it, ask for it when you need it, and assure others that it is a gift they can claim. At the end of the week, discuss how this practice impacted you and others.

Challenges for Living It Out:

- Try affirming others and reminding them that grace is real.
- Reflect on the things that bother you where you might try showing more grace.
- Ask for grace and forgiveness when you have struggled to be kind or patient.
- Try asking yourself, “what happened to them?” when someone is hurtful to you rather than asking, “why did they do this to me?”

Take Home Sheets



Day 4: Linked in Truth

Scripture to Read: Exodus 18:5-24

Questions for Reflection:

- Who in your life can talk to you like Jethro talked to Moses?
- What does it mean to be a mentor?
- How do you best hear difficult truths or criticism?
- How willing are you to grow or change the way you do things?

Activities to Share:

1. Each person will make a list of mentors (people you know personally) and what each does for them, teaches them, or what role they play in their life. Then make a list of things they need to learn, want to understand better, or learn to do. Invite each person to brainstorm people who might be able to help and try reaching out to one as a mentor.
2. Give each person a piece of paper and ask them to write things they are good at in a column down the middle of the page. On the left, ask them to write who helped them get good at it. On the right, ask them to imagine who they might help, teach, coach, or pass on their skill to. Afterwards, spend some time talking about how we receive and pass on knowledge, skills, and wisdom. Finally, ask everyone to discuss who has shaped their faith and whose faith they might be shaping.

Challenges for Living It Out:

- Work on developing good mentors.
- Be open to being a mentor to someone else.
- Practice responding to criticism with grace and self-reflection. Ask those you trust the most to give you honest feedback when needed.

Take Home Sheets



Day 5: Linked to Love

Scripture to Read: 1 John 4:7-9,19

Questions for Reflection:

- Whose love has shown you what love is all about?
- How does loving each other reveal God in this world?
- How does imagining all love flowing from God change the way we treat others?

Activities to Share:

1. Brainstorm the different ways people love each other and the different types of relationships people rely on. For each, try to name how remembering that love comes from God might enhance or strengthen that relationship.
2. Start a link chain made of paper by having everyone write down those whose love teaches them about God on strips of paper and connecting them with tape or staples. The chain can continue to be expanded over time. This could be hung in a common space or made into a Christmas decoration that gets pulled out and used to decorate a tree each year.

Challenges for Living It Out:

- Tell people you love them, out loud.
- Give God thanks for relationships when you experience them as a blessing.
- Practice making room for God in all your relationships.